

Research Papers

# SANSKRIT

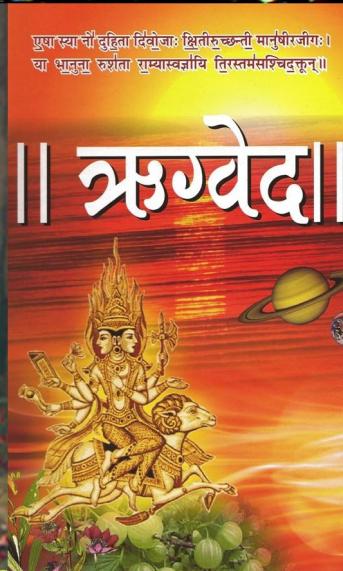
AS

## A LIVING LANGUAGE IN INDIA

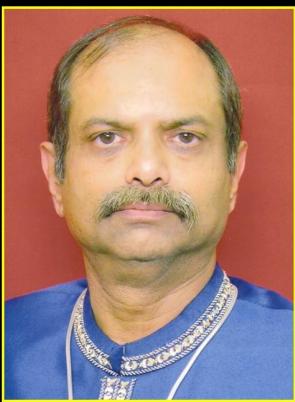
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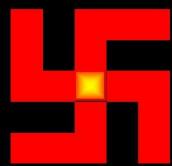
BY: PANDIT SHYAMAJI KRISHNAVARMA



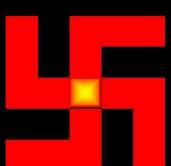




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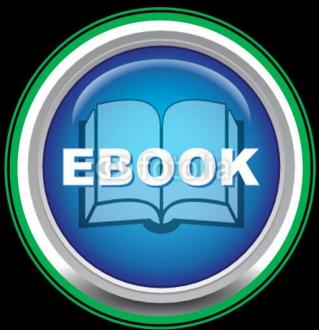
# SANSKRIT AS A LIVING LANGUAGE IN INDIA

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FIRST EDITION

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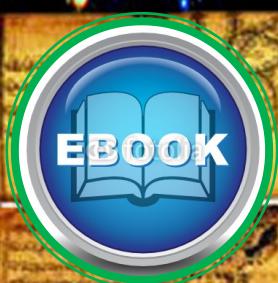
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HINDU SWATANTRYAVIR SMRUTI SANSTHANAM

# THE USE OF WRITING IN ANCIENT INDIA



## AVAILABLE

BY  
PANDIT SHYAMAJI KRISHNAVARMA

COMPILED BY  
HEMANTKUMAR GAJANAN PADHYA



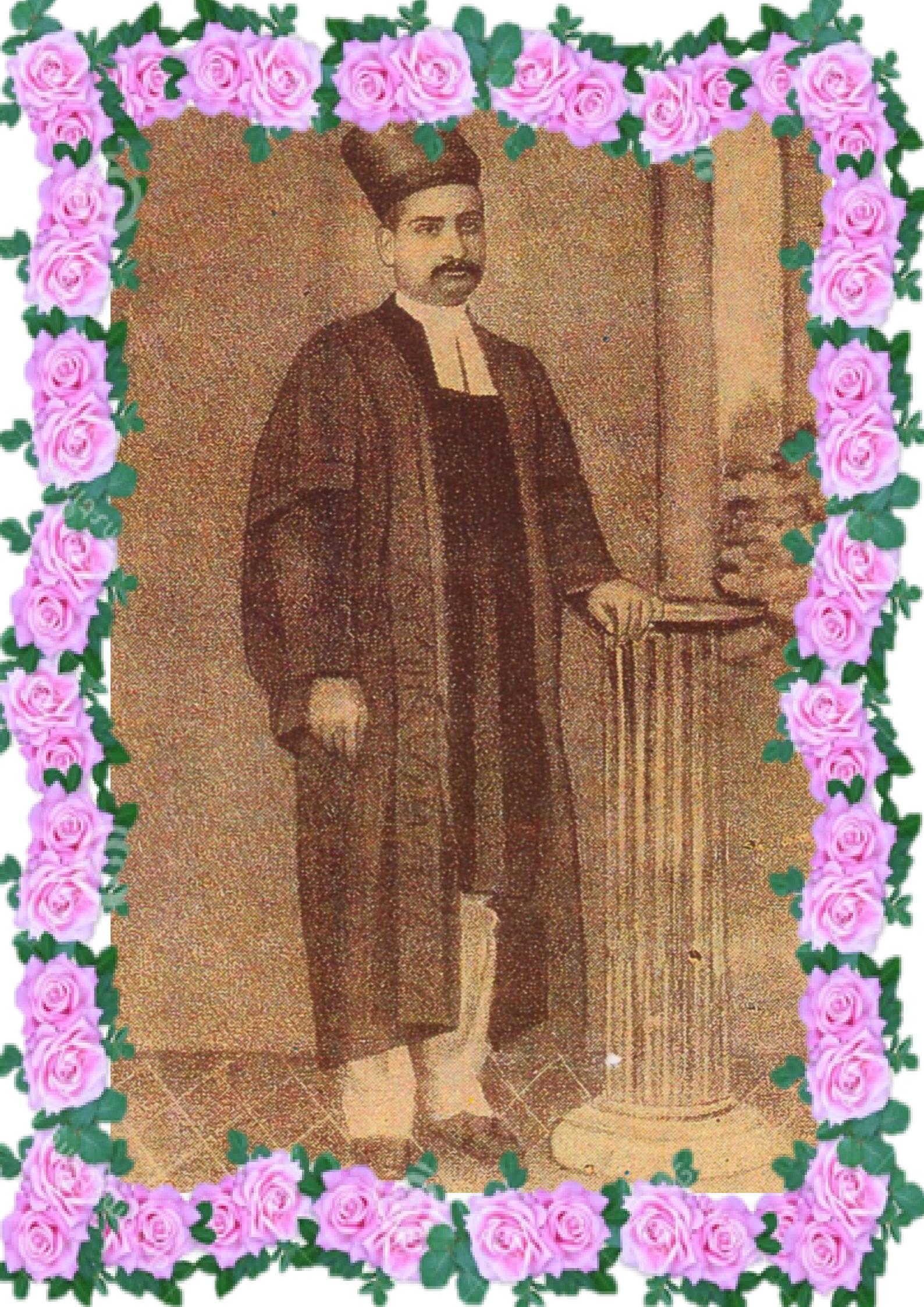
# PREFACE

Pandit Shyamaji Krishnavarma was a great Sanskrit scholar who mastered the language at very young age. Swami Dayanand Saraswati was so impressed with Shyamaji's knowledge of Sanskrit and Hindu shastras that Swamiji ordained him as one of his chief disciple in Arya Samaj movement. Although Shyamaji had very traditional and extensive education in Sanskrit language and Hindu or Arya dharma from a very famous Pathashala of Pandit Vishwanath Shastri in Mumbai, He was fortunate to learn more under the patronage of Swami Dayaanand, a great master of Vedas. No one ever predicted that a little boy from an economically poor background, who had initial education in Sanskrit would become a world famous Sanskrit scholar and would become a lecturer of Sanskrit at Balliol college at University of Oxford in England. Shyamaji's luck struck when Sir Monier- Williams was so impressed and astonished to hear young Shyamaji delivering a powerful lecture in pure Sanskrit. Professor Monier-Williams instantly offered Shyamaji a job as his assistant at Oxford and thereafter Shyamaji never looked back. Shyamaji made his name and fame at Oxford. Pandit Shyamaji was sent to the International Congress of Orientalists as a delegate of the Government of India by the secretary of state of India. Pandit Shyamaji presented and read papers on his research on the subject of "Sanskrit as a living language in India." at the international congress held at Berlin, Germany on 14 September 1881. That was the greatest achievement of that poor and orphaned child Shyamaji on world stage, who initially learned Sanskrit from Shri B. B. Pandya at his birth place Mandavi. He also read two poems in Sanskrit sent by Ram Das Sen from kolkota and Ramabai from Assam.

Shyamaji made a history at the congress by emphasising his arguments against the belief of many orientalists that Sanskrit was the dead language. He brilliantly dismissed the negative belief of many western people and persuaded the orientalists that Sanskrit is still living language in India even after many cultural and religious invasions over centuries. He clarified some misconception regarding Sanskrit language including exaggerated difficulties of its grammar. It is a sad news and shameful and grave mistake of the government of India after independence that they did not declare the world's richest language Sanskrit as their national language. As being a nationalist leader and Sanskrit scholar Pandit Shyamaji would have been the strongest advocate and supporter of Sanskrit as national language of India.

Many valuable work of Pandit Shyamaji are now lost for ever. We deemed our humble duty to preserve this brilliantly presented research paper for future generation of students, serious readers, scholars and Sanskrit language enthusiasts in the form of an e-booklet for educational and reference purpose as a part of our campaign to preserve promote and propagate the memories and work of Pandit Shyamaji Krishnavarma. We hope that the admirer and lovers of Pandit Shyamaji work will definitely welcome our sincere efforts in that direction.

**: Mr Hemantkumar Gajanan Padhy  
Hindu Swatantryavir Smruti Sansthanam  
United Kingdom**



# SANSKRIT AS

## A LIVING LANGUAGE IN INDIA

BY : PANDIT SHYAMAJI KRISHNAVARMA  
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A paper, which has for its subject „Sanskrit as a Living Language in India“, would seem startling at the first sight on an occasion like this, and yet I need not apologize for introducing so curious a topic, since it is necessary for various reasons that European scholars should know exactly what position Sanskrit holds in India at the present day, as compared with its past history.

Sanskrit is supposed to be dead, and many Oriental scholars in Europe and elsewhere call it a dead language, nay, some go even further and maintain that it was never spoken generally by the common people. Now I must confess at the very outset that nothing can be more astounding to a native of India than the statement which makes his sacred language devoid of life, not only in our own times but also in all ages.

Many strange theories are afloat about Sanskrit, but none is so striking as that which denies even the possibility of its ever having been a spoken language.

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1) S. den ersten Theil der Verhandlungen p. 87. 88.

I will endeavour to show in this paper, firstly, that Sanskrit, as we find it settled in the *Ashtâdhyâyi* of Pâṇini, was a spoken vernacular at the time when that great grammarian flourished; and, secondly, that Sanskrit is at present extensively used as a medium of conversation and correspondence among learned men in all parts of India, from Cashmere to Cape Comorin.

Those who advocate the theory that Sanskrit was never spoken, will have to show why Sanskrit, notwithstanding its immense literature, should be debarred from enjoying the same privileges as are undoubtedly shared by all the ancient and modern languages of the world. Unless we find some substantial evidence to the contrary, we are bound to treat Sanskrit like any other language, subject to no restrictions. Latin and Greek are considered dead languages, but no one doubts even for a moment that they were once spoken; this being the case, it is really difficult to understand why Sanskrit should be the only language deprived of the benefit of that argument.

Let us now consider some of the objections which are usually raised against the use of Sanskrit as a spoken vernacular.

Some say that Sanskrit is an improvement on the primitive Prâkṛita languages of India, but many scholars believe that Sanskrit and the Prâkṛitas were contemporaneous, and that they were related to each other as sisters, since it is well known, they argue, that in all the ancient Nâṭakas or dramas, the heroes speak Sanskrit, while the persons of lower rank express themselves in some sort of Prâkṛita. Others think that Sanskrit was invented by the Brâhmaṇas with a view to keep all knowledge to themselves, and that it was one of the many means employed by priesthood to deceive the people, and in support of this theory they add that the chief aim of the sacerdotal class in India was to keep the people ignorant by discouraging the study of Sanskrit among the masses, and by directly prohibiting them from learning any foreign language, as it

may be inferred from a well-known Śloka<sup>1</sup>), the meaning of which is that „no one should repeat a word of a Yavana language, even though it were to save his life, and that no one should enter the temple of a Jaina or Buddhist even if he is attacked by an elephant”. Others again maintain that Sanskrit could not have been a vernacular, for the intricacies and irregularities of its grammar, its elaborate and tedious compounds, and, finally, the most systematic, and yet artificial, rules of Sandhi or euphony, which pervade its structure, tend to show that it could not have been spoken generally by the common people.

Now those who hold that Sanskrit is a development of the Prâkṛitas, or that the Prâkṛitas and Sanskrit were contemporaneous being related to each other as sisters, labour, in my humble opinion, under a serious mistake regarding the etymology of the word „Prâkṛita“. Vararuci, the wellknown author of the Prâkṛita-prakâśa and Hemacandra, the celebrated grammarian and lexicographer, have clearly shown that the word Prâkṛita is derived from „Prakṛiti“, and that it is a Taddhita form with the affix „aṇ“.<sup>2</sup>) Now the meaning of the word „Prakṛiti“ is source or origin, and Vararuci says that Sanskrit is Prakṛiti<sup>3</sup>), or the original language from which all the Prâkṛitas are derived; he gives rules for four principal Prâkṛitas<sup>4</sup>),

1) न वदेद् यावनीभाषामाणैः कण्ठगतैरपि ।  
हस्तिना तात्यमानोऽपि न गच्छेत्तीनमन्दिरम् ॥

2) तत्र भवः (Pāṇ IV, 3, 53).

3) प्रकृतिः संस्कृतम् (Prâkṛita-prakâśa XII, 2).  
शैषः संस्कृतात् (Prâkṛita-prakâśa IX, 18).

4) माहाराष्ट्री (Prâkṛita-prakâśa I—IX).

पिश्चाची (Prâ-prakâśa X).

मागधी (Prâ-prakâśa XI).

शौरसेनी (Prâ-prakaśa XII).

namely, Mâhârâshtri, Paisâcî, Mâgadhi and Saursenî and he has proved conclusively in his Prâkṛita-prakâśa that these Prâkṛitas are entirely dependent on the Prâkṛiti which is of course Sanskrit. It is evident therefore that Sanskrit is not an improvement on the Prâkṛitas, but on the contrary it is the source from which they all take their rise.

I make bold to say that there is not a single sûtra or aphorism in the whole Ashṭâdhyâyî which might lead us to believe that Pâṇini was acquainted with any of the numerous Prâkṛitas. The same thing, however, cannot be said about Patañjali, who flourished many centuries after Pâṇini. The author of the Mahâbhâshya himself tells us that there are many corrupt forms of Sanskrit words, and he gives, as an example, the word *go* (cow), which was changed to *gâvî*, *goñî*, *gotâ*, *gopotalikâ*, &c<sup>1</sup>). Patañjali advocates the study of Sanskrit grammar very earnestly, and gives many reasons why a thorough knowledge of this particular subject is necessary; among other things, he says, that the grammar should be studied in order that we may not become Mlecchas, for to pronounce Sanskrit words incorrectly is characteristic of a Mleccha, or barbarian<sup>2</sup>). The words „*apaśabda*” and „*apabhrañśa*”<sup>3</sup>), which Patañjali frequently uses in his great commentary are unknown to the author of the Ashṭâdhyâyî.

Those who think that even Pâṇini did not speak Sanskrit as aver-

1) एकैकस्य शब्दस्य वहवो उपभंश्याः । तद् यथा । गौरित्वस्य  
शब्दस्य गावी गोणी गोता गोपोतस्तिकादयो उपभंश्याः ॥ (Patañjali's  
Vyâkaraṇa-mahâbhâshya I. 1—1).

2) तेऽसुरा हेतयो हेतय इति कुर्वन्तः परावभूवः । तस्माद् ब्राह्मणेन  
न स्तेच्छतवै नापभाषितवै । स्तेच्छो ह वा एष यदपशब्दः । स्तेच्छा  
मा भूमेत्यधेयं व्याकरणम् ॥ (Patañjali's Vyâ-Mahâbhâshya I. 1—1).

3) लघोयाच्छब्दोपदेशो गरीयानपशब्दोपदेशः । एकैकस्य शब्दस्य  
वहवो उपभंश्याः ॥ (Patañjali's Vyâ-Mahâbhâshya I. 1—1).

vernacular, will have to encounter a new difficulty. As I have said above, he was not aware of the existence of any Prâkṛita, what language then did he speak? This is a question which requires a satisfactory answer. The internal evidence afforded by his own grammar warrants us in saying that the language he spoke was Sanskrit. He gives rules both for the modern and for the Vedik Sanskrit, but the bulk of his *Ashtâdhyâyi* deals with the spoken language which he calls „Bhâshâ“. It is worthy of notice that Pâṇini does not use the word Sanskrit at all as an epithet of the language the grammar of which he himself undertook to write. He was too modest to call his mother-tongue “perfected and adorned”, which sense, as we all know, is conveyed by the word Sanskrit (Pâṇ. vi. 1, 137)<sup>1</sup>).

Now the word Bhâshâ, which is derived from the root „bhâsh“, to speak, is very important for our inquiry here. Pâṇini uses the word Bhâshâ (Pâṇ. iii. 2, 108)<sup>2</sup>) as opposed to the primitive language of the Chandas, which had ceased to be spoken in his days. This particular term can only be applied to a spoken language, for it is an established fact that the modern vernaculars, such as Hindi and others, are known in India at the present day as Bhâshâs. The general and special rules given by Pâṇini for accenting words in the Bhâshâ<sup>3</sup>) as differing from the Chandas would be quite useless if Sanskrit were not a spoken language. The same thing might be said about many Taddhita affixes, which occupy a prominent place in his work, but which can have no claim to notice in the grammar of an artificial language.

1) संपर्युपेभ्यः करोती भूषणे (Pâṇ. VI. 1—137).

2) भाषायां सद्वसत्रुवः (Pâṇ. III. 2. 108), मयहृ वैतयोर्भाषाया मभस्याच्छादनयोः । नित्यं वृद्धग्रादिभ्यः (Pâṇ. IV. 3. 143—144 sc.).

3) विभाषा भाषायाम् (Pâṇ. VI. 1—181), शुष्टार्पिते च च्छन्दसि । नित्यं मन्त्रे (Pâṇ. VI. 1. 209—210 sc.).

It is evident from what I have stated above that the so called classical Sanskrit must have been a spoken vernacular at the time of Pāṇini.

As to the theory that Sanskrit was an invention of the Brāhmaṇas, who, as a matter of right, had the sole monopoly of that language, one can easily show that all evidence is entirely against it. Strange to say that some of my own countrymen entertain such a novel idea about Sanskrit, but I am bound to state at the same time that those who advocate this theory in India know as a rule next to nothing of their sacred language, their education being wholly after the English fashion. We should not judge of the past from the present state of society in India. Many superstitious customs and pernicious institutions, such as caste, idolatry, infant-marriage and others, which were quite foreign to ancient India, characterize the Indians of the present day. They have undergone such a marvellous change in their habits and ways of thinking, that we cannot safely argue for the past from what we see now in India. It is unfortunately true at present that very few Brāhmaṇas will undertake to repeat a Vedik hymn, or even teach Sanskrit to a person of low caste, but that bigotry, I maintain, is not sanctioned by our scriptures; on the contrary, there is ample evidence in the Vedas, the Brāhmaṇas, the Upanishads, and in the Sūtra works to show that Sanskrit was the common property of all men without distinction of caste or creed. The social and religious institutions of the Indian Āryas, who spoke Sanskrit, were open to all persons who desired knowledge, and instances are not wanting where men of the lowest caste have risen to a most exalted position. We read in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (ii. 19), for example, that Kavasha Ailūṣha, who was a Sūdra and son of a low woman<sup>1</sup>), was greatly respected for his

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1) ऋषयो वे सरस्वतां सत्त्वमासत । ते कवषमेशूषं सोमादग्नवर्

literary attainments, and admitted into the class of Rishis. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of his life is that he, Śûdra as he was, distinguished himself as the Rishi of some of the hymns of the Rig-Veda (Rig., x. 30-34). It is distinctly stated in the Chândogyopanishad that Jâbâla, who is otherwise called Satya-kâma, had no „Gotra“, or family name whatever (Chând. Up. iv. 4); all that we know about his parentage is that he was the son of a woman named Jabâlâ, and that he is called after his mother; in short, his name is a matronymic, if I be allowed to use the word. Though born of unknown parents, Jâbâla is said to have been the founder of a school of the Yajur-veda. Even in the Āpastamba-sûtra<sup>1)</sup> (ii. 5—10) and the Manu-smṛiti<sup>2)</sup> (x. 65) — vide Rigvedâdi-bhâshya-bhûmikâ P. 312 by Pañdit Dayânanda Sarasvatî-svâmin; vide also „Lecture on caste“ by the Hon’ble Gopâlarâo Hari Deśamukha — we find that a Śûdra can become a Brâhmaṇa and Brâhmaṇa can become a Śûdra, according to their good or bad deeds. There is an important hymn in the twenty-sixth chapter of the Śukla-Yajur-veda<sup>3)</sup> (xxvi. 2), which commands that the Brâhmaṇas, Kshatriyas,

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दासा: पुच्चः कितवोऽत्राद्यणः कथन्नो मध्येऽदीक्षिष्टे ति । sc. (Aitareya Brâ. II, 19). Compare Kaushîtaki Brâhmaṇa XII. 3.

1) धर्मचर्यया अघन्यो वर्णः पूर्वं पूर्वं वर्णमापद्यते जातिपरिवृत्तौ ॥  
अधर्मचर्यया पूर्वो वर्णो अघन्यं अघन्यं वर्णमापद्यते जातिपरिवृत्तौ  
(Prapâṭhaka II. Paṭala 5. Sûtras 10-11).

2) शूद्रो ब्राह्मणतामेति ब्राह्मणश्चैति शूद्रताम् ।  
चवियाज्वातमेवन्तु विद्याद्वैश्यात्तथैव च ॥ (Manu-smṛiti. X. 65).  
3) यथेमां वाचं कल्याणोमावदानि जनेभः । ब्रह्मराजन्याभ्यां  
शूद्राय चायोथ च स्वाय चारणाय । प्रियो देवानां दक्षिणायै द्रातुरिह  
भूयासमयं मे कामः समृद्धतामुपं मादो नमतु ॥ (Śukla Yajur-Veda.  
Vâjas-Samhitâ. XXVI. 2).

Vaiśyas, Śūdras, and even the menials of the lowest rank should propagate the sacred and auspicious language of the Vedas. Such an explicit statement in our scriptures leaves no room for supposing that the Vedas were intended exclusively for the Brāhmaṇas. Pāṇini mentions the name of a celebrated grammarian called Cākraṭarmanā in the sixth chapter of his *Ashtādhyāyī*<sup>1)</sup> (Pāṇ. vi. 1. 130); now Cākraṭarmanā was a Kshatriya by birth, since he has the prescribed Kshatriya-termination at the end of his name, which is a patronymic<sup>2)</sup> of Cakravarman. Cākraṭarmanā did not agree with Pāṇini about a certain rule of euphony, and his opinion on the subject was of such a great importance that the author of the *Ashtādhyāyī* was obliged to make a special aphorism containing the name of that Kshatriya grammarian.

The instances given above from ancient works cannot fail to make clear to everyone that Sanskṛit was by no means solely monopolised by the Brāhmaṇas, but that it was used indiscriminately by all classes throughout Āryāvarta.

As to the theory that Sanskṛit could not have been a spoken language in consequence of its most complicated grammar, I need only say that it is not based on a sound argument. The very fact that Sanskṛit abounds in exceptions and irregular forms is a palpable proof of its being spoken generally by the common people at one time. It is said that in some respects words are like coins, and as those coins which pass thousands of hands every day are irregular in shape, in the same way the words which are of commonest occurrence are irregular in form and have peculiarities of their own. It is well known that almost all languages, both ancient and modern,

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1) ईऽ चाक्रवर्मणस्य (Pāṇ. VI. 1. 130).

2) न मपूर्वी इपत्वे इवर्मणः (Pāṇ. VI. 4. 170).

have irregular forms for the words which are of frequent use, and Sanskrit is not by any means an exception to this general rule.

It is true that the style of some of the modern books dispels all belief in the efficacy of Sanskrit as a means of Communication; it is also true that no one can possibly understand all at once what is expressed in the following manner: —

पिको उपि को उपि कोपिको वियोगिनोरभर्त्सयत् ।

वचासि भङ्गमालपन्नितानि तानि तानि ताः ॥

(Nalodaya-Sarga II. 12).

We may well call this काकभाषा or the language of crows. This sort of speech is not intended for human beings to understand. I may add that long compounds, alliterations and gingling sounds which are too often found in modern works are almost unknown in the ancient literature of India, when Sanskrit was the language of the common people.

The rules of euphony, which seem artificial to foreigners, sound quite natural to an Indian ear, and they therefore do not afford an argument against Sanskrit as a spoken language.

Great latitude however is allowed in the application of the rules of euphony. Samhitâ, which term Pâṇini uses in preference to Sandhi, is strictly observed in a verbal or nominal form (pada), in the case of a root (dhâtu) and a prefix (upasarga), as well as in a compound (samâsa), but in a sentence it entirely depends upon the will of the speaker<sup>1)</sup>.

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1) संहितैकपदे नित्या नित्या धातूपसर्गयोः ।

नित्या समासे वाक्ये तु सा विवक्षामपेषते ॥

Vide also Patañjali's Vyâkaraṇa Mahâbhâshya on परः सम्बन्धः संहिता (Pâñ. I. 4. 109) and the Vârttika संहितावसानयोखीकाविदितत्वात् सिद्धम् on विरामोऽवसानम् (Pâñ. I. 4. 110).

That Pāṇini mentions many grammarians, and notices in detail the lingual usages peculiar to certain parts of India, proves beyond doubt the existence of Sanskrit as a spoken vernacular at the time when he wrote his great grammar.

I will now briefly state how we in India regard Sanskrit at the present day. In spite of all the exaggerated difficulties of its grammar, I venture to say that the educated classes of India can and do use Sanskrit as a medium of intercommunication of every kind, and I maintain that in one sense Sanskrit is still a living language. I allow that it is not spoken generally by the common people in any particular part of India, but then I say that in a way it is spoken all over the country, for every city and town, nay, every village in India can produce Pāṇḍits who understand Sanskrit almost as thoroughly as their own vernacular. In fact, Sanskrit is a kind of „lingua franca“ among learned men throughout India, and who will doubt its extreme convenience when employed as such? Those Oriental scholars who have lived many years in India will verify the statement I have made above. I know for certain that Professor Monier Williams during his travels in India hardly passed a day without meeting some Pāṇḍits who could not talk to him in any other language except in Sanskrit. Dr. Bühler during the period of his professorship at Bombay and Puna was obliged to speak Sanskrit almost every day with the Śāstris of his College, while Dr. Kielhorn and other Oriental scholars who are now in India have no other alternative but to converse in Sanskrit, when they come into contact with Pāṇḍits. A great deal of correspondence in Sanskrit is now going on between Indian and European scholars. During my stay in England, I have read many Sanskrit letters addressed to some distinguished Orientalists. Sanskrit is often the only channel of communication between Eastern and Western scholars, and in support

of this statement I cannot cite a better authority than that of Professor Max Müller, who in his „Hibbert Lectures“ (p. 156) says: — „Of course they (those Brâhmaṇas who uphold the sacred traditions of the past) would not speak English or even Bengali. They speak Sanskrit and write Sanskrit, and I frequently receive letters from some of them couched in the most faultless language“.

The Sanskrit odes addressed to this Congress by Râja Sou-rindro Mohun Tagore and Râm Dâs Sen afford another proof in favour of my argument. Few European scholars know to what extent we use Sanskrit among ourselves. I have friends in different parts of India, who cannot communicate with me in any other language except in Sanskrit. It was only a few months ago that Professor Monier Williams gave in the *Athenaeum*<sup>1)</sup> the translation of a letter in Sanskrit, addressed to me by Pandit Dayânanda Sarasvatî Svâmîn, who at one time spoke Sanskrit even with children. I have met other Sanñyâsis at Benares, who have made a vow to talk only in Sanskrit and not in any other language whatever. Were it not for the universal employment of Sanskrit and Hindi as vehicles of intellectual intercourse by the educated classes in all parts of India, the interchange of ideas would almost be impossible owing to the great number of the spoken vernaculars current in different provinces of that vast country; and I say this from my own experience, for I had the honour of delivering numerous lectures and holding discussions in Sanskrit on social and religious subjects in many cities of Western and Northern India, where my own countrymen had no difficulty in understanding me.

I think I have shown clearly enough that Sanskrit was a spoken

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1) *Athenaeum*, October, 23, 1880.

vernacular at the time of Pāṇini, and that it is still spoken and written extensively by the educated classes in India.

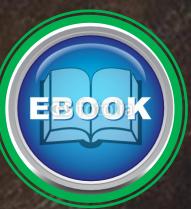
In conclusion, I thank the learned members of this Congress most sincerely on behalf of my countrymen and acknowledge the debt of gratitude we owe to the oriental scholars of Europe and America for interesting themselves in the literature of India and bringing it prominently before the notice of the civilized world.

## THE END



**SANSKRIT IS THE MOTHER OF  
ALL LANGUAGES OF THE WORLD.**

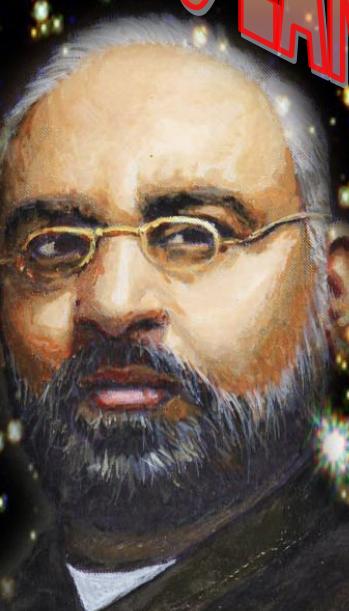
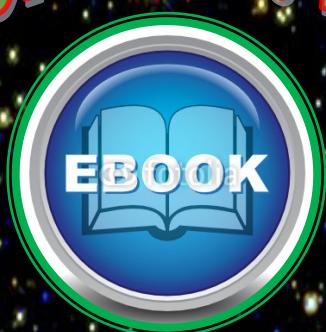
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**SWASTIKANAND**

# SANSKRIT AS A LIVING LANGUAGE IN INDIA



USHA PRAKASHAN



HINDU SWATANTRYAVIR SMRUTI SANSTHANAM

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